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Holt-Atherton Pacific Center for Western Studies

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JOHN MUIR NEWSLETTER



Holt-Atherton Pacific Center
for Western Studies

University of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif 95211

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EDITORIAL STAFF: RONALD H. LIMBAUGH, KIRSTEN E. LEWIS

PROJECT UPDATE

Project staff had cause to celebrate last week. After nearly a year of intensive work they completed the control system for the 457 unpublished manuscripts and precursor drafts of publications that comprise Series III of the Muir collection at the University of the Pacific. Each of the 11,133 pages in this extensive and complex series has been identified, numbered, conserved if special care was needed, and arranged by chronological sequence where possible to determine it. Control cards have been prepared for each separate item indicating author, title (supplied if necessary), place of authorship (if known), date (approximated if not explicit), size and number of pages, location, and subordinate subjects if not clear in the title. Key information from the control cards will form the basis of the index to the Microform Guide which, when completed, will make it possible for researchers to instantly locate unpublished and precursor works by title, subject, and approximate date of preparation.

THE NEW BUDGET BATTLES IN CONGRESS

For the third year in a row the Administration has eliminated the grants program of the National Historical Publications and Record Commission from the budget recommendation for the next fiscal year. However, a new authorization bill (HR 2196) to fund the grants program for five years (FY 84-88) at \$3 million a year has been introduced to Congress and is now under study by the Government Operations subcommittee which must report to the full committee by May 15. The Coalition to Save our Documentary Heritage calls upon all supporters and benefactors of the John Muir Microform Project and other documentary programs funded by the NHPRC to write their legislative representatives urging support for the refunding bill at an authorized level of at least \$4 million, which is the amount authorized between 1975 and 1981, when NHPRC funding was cut by 25%. A copy of your letter of recommendation should be sent to Rep. Jack Brooks, Chairman of the House Government Operations Committee. California members of the committee are Tom Lantos, Barbara Boxer, Mel Levine, and Alfred McCandless.

The Administration's new budget also proposes a budget freeze for the National Archives and Records Service, which has suffered severely from staff reductions of nearly 29% since 1980, as well as from an additional 6% cut in personnel funds imposed by the administrator of the General Services Administra-

BUDGET BATTLES cont.

tion, the umbrella agency in which NARS is currently housed. For the past year a bipartisan Congressional effort has been underway to make NARS an independent agency as well as to restore essential public services through increased funding. The Coalition urges your support behind Senate Bill 905, introduced this year to free NARS from GSA. A copy of your letter should be directed to William V. Roth, Jr., Chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee.

RECENT MUIR RESEARCH

In response to several requests, we publish below a list of individuals who are now or have been recently engaged in research involving the John Muir Papers at the University of the Pacific. Inquiries should be directed to the individual at the institutional address if indicated.

NAME	INSTITUTION/LOCATION	
Larry Blaszcak	Indianapolis, Ind.	JM & the Indiana connection
Frank Buske	Univ. of Alaska	JM biography
Michael Cohen	Yosemite National Park	JM biography
Heather Conover	Cohasset, Mass.	JM & Herbert Gleason
Robert Engberg	San Diego, Calif.	JM's newspaper articles
Richard Fleck	Univ. of Wyoming	A JM handbook
Stephen Fox	Cambridge, Mass.	JM biography
Lisa Hawkins	Seattle, Wash.	JM & the scientific community
Paul Hickman	Univ. of New Mexico	JM photo collection
Ted Hinckley	San Jose State Univ., Calif.	JM's Alaska articles
Bill & Mamie Kimes	Mariposa, Calif.	JM bibliography
Ben Martin	Stanford Univ.	JM & Hetch Hetchy
Richard Orsi	Hayward State Univ., Calif.	JM & the Southern Pacific RR.
Peter Palmquist	Humboldt State Univ., Calif.	JM and Carleton E. Watkins
Stuart Robinson	Durham, North Carolina	JM in Nevada
P. J. Ryan	Martinez, Calif.	JM 's travels abroad
Shirley Sargent	Yosemite National Park	JM & daughter Wanda
Millie Stanley	Pardeeville, Wisc.	JM in Wisconsin
Carol Suplicki	Tucson, Ariz.	JM & the Strentzel family
Frederick Turner	Santa Fe, New Mexico	JM biography
Kathleen Wadden	Washington, D.C.	JM's scientific thought

JOHN MUIR QUOTABLES

The William E. Colby Library of the Sierra Club is coordinating a project to compile and publish a compendium of Muir's best-known (and perhaps some not so well known) quotes. Having just completed the processing of the Muir manuscripts collection, including thousands of pages of drafts, notes and one-liners that flowed from Muir's florid pen, we can attest to both the need and the complexity of the task which the Sierra Club staff and members have set for themselves.

CLIPPING FROM THE MUIR COLLECTION (Bailey Millard, Hearst journalist and Muir admirer, wrote this tribute for the San Francisco Examiner, March 29, 1903, on the eve of Muir's round-the-world excursion. It probably embarrassed Muir and infuriated his testy friend John Burroughs.)

WILL EXPLORE COLD SIBERA

In his sixty-fifth year, and still as sturdy a mountain climber as when he discovered the great Alaska glacier which bears his name, John Muir, who has carefully explored all the wildest and most inaccessible places in our land where Nature hides herself away in secret beauty, and who has sailed the fiords of coldest Norway and the coral-lined coves of warmest Polynesia, is making his studies of peaks and the structure of plants, is now preparing to go farther afield than ever before. He is going to explore the forests of Siberia and Manchuria in company with Sargent, the tree man, who wrote that extensive "Silva of North America," in fourteen enormous volumes.

Muir will leave his home at Martinez about the 15th of May and will join Sargent in New York. They will then sail for Europe and take the Transsiberian Railway and journey across the great steppes to that rare country which is said to be of all wilderness the most howling.

Mr. Sargent shows the sapiency of the scientist in uniting his fortunes with Muir, whose woodcraft is probably superior to that of any other man in America. Muir is a man whom no prospective hardship can frighten, except, possible, crushing through a street crowd, for he always prefers to walk on a glacial pavement to one on the concrete. He thinks nothing of starting out on a fortnight's tramp in the high Sierras with no other equipment than a bag of bread, a tin cup and a handful of tea. In fact, that meager provision proved sufficient for him in all his hardest tramps, and he makes light of some of his most wearisome and stupendous tasks. Clarence King, after long and careful preparation, climbed to the top of Mount Tyndall and afterward wrote of his awful perils and narrow escapes during the tremendous ascent; but when Muir climbed Tyndall he ran up to the summit of the peak and back to camp before breakfast.

I am afraid that Californians do not know enough of John Muir, who to me seems to be one of the finest and most engaging figures in the whole wide West. When Mr. Doubleday recently gave us our much-deserved scolding for our disloyalty to our best literary men, Muir's name recurred to me at once. That simple, gentle figure, living so quietly there in that little rift of the Contra Costa hills--the best example of plain living and high thinking that I can now recall--seems to me a standing reproach to the neglectful Californians who know the name of John Burroughs, in its tame entourage, much better, as it is constantly referred to in the Eastern prints, while the name of John Muir, beside whose solid life work that of John Burroughs is like a little pile of brushwood, rarely gets mentioned. I mean no disrespect to the worthy Mr. Burroughs, but it irritates me to see his prosy matter, the reading of which is often about as interesting as beating a carpet, rated so highly by our people, while Muir's magnificent work goes unread. In all the "literary" conversations to which I have listened and in which I have so frequently heard the name of the author of "The Pink Cow," or of the man who wrote "The Sonnets of a Stevedore," or other kindred matter so engaging and important to a certain order of minds, I have not heard the name of John Muir a dozen times, or a mention of his charming books. It would seem, when it came to reading, as if we cared more for the work of an effeminate freak than for that of a real shaggy man. For in California, except to a very small circle, Muir's fragrant nature writings, breath the breath of the high Sierras and the subtle odor of the sugar pines, is unknown. And, yet, what a rare, poetic pen the man yields! Stevenson at his best, in his "Inland Voyage," never wrote anything so piquant, so zestful, so full of the spirit of the open air, so Homeric in its sweep, as some of the chapters of "The Mountains of California," while the finality--that is the word--with which Muir has treated of Yosemite and the Yellowstone must be the despair of all the truly appreciative writers who come after him.

Given such a sensitive, receptive mind as Muir's, with his ability to report what he sees, and forty years of careful observation of Nature's wildest moods and greatest pictures, and you have a man fit to voice the message of the wilds. His work is recognized among all the high scientific and literary authorities in the Eastern States and it ought to be better known to the general run of people in California.

To the discerning minds of the country Muir is the accredited spokesman of Nature in the West, and he should be able to make a most valuable report of what he will see and note so carefully in the East.

In talking with me the other day at his pretty country home in the hills he told me many of his adventures in that quiet, offhand manner which always characterizes the report of the man who does things and never that of the bombast. Speaking of his tour of exploration which will take the better part of a year of his valuable time, he remarked:

"We shall extend our journeyings to Japan and to Java and the Philippines. I should like to go to the Himalayas, too, but we cannot go everywhere."

He always speaks of trees with genuine affection, as of human beings. "I expect to find some relations of our old friend, the sequoia, in Manchuria," he said. "They are known to exist in Japan. But I am satisfied that nowhere shall I find any trees as large as our giant redwoods."

The prospect of this hazardous journey is not one to daunt the spirit of the man who discovered the great Muir glacier and who has stood on the tops of all our highest mountain peaks.

Mr. Muir does not write his wonderful books for money. He has a horror of the hampering futilities of life and seems to despise wealth as he despises danger.

"The rich man," remarked the old mountaineer to me, "carries too heavy a pair of blankets."

Simplicity! There is a man after Thoreau's own heart.

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